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SUBJECT: DEPUTY PM ZOWBAIE'S HUMAN RIGHTS STAFF AND TAWAFUQ
PARLIAMENT BLOC LEADER ON IRAQI AND COALITION DETENTIONS

REF: A) BAGHDAD 2468 B) BAGHDAD 2012 C) BAGHDAD 2398

Classified By: DEPUTY POLITICAL COUNSELOR ROBERT WALLER FOR REASONS 1.4
(B,D).

¶1. (C) SUMMARY: On July 23, Sunni Deputy Prime Minister (PM) Salaam Zowbaie's human rights officers Shakur Farhan and Ahmed Faze outlined two distinct sets of Sunni concerns with Iraqi and Coalition detention centers, noting they both hold majority Sunni detainee populations. Farhan and Faze commented that Iraqi detention centers require more oversight by the Human Rights Ministry and faster judicial processing of detainees, while Coalition detention centers need more rehabilitation and parole plans for their detainees. They said in the foreseeable future, high-level Sunni officials would likely demand group detainee releases in exchange for agreeing to visit Camp Bucca, the main Coalition detention facility. In a separate conversation on July 26, head of the parliament's Sunni Tawafuq bloc Ayad al-Sammaraie emphasized that persisting poor human rights conditions within Iraqi detention facilities are a main stumbling block to political reconciliation. The Human Rights Minister has recently sent conflicting signals on detention center inspections; Post and Task Force 134 will coordinate to offer logistical support. END SUMMARY.

SUNNI OFFICIALS: IRAQI DETENTION CENTERS NEED MORE OVERSIGHT

¶2. (C) Deputy PM Zowbaie's Human Rights Officers said on July 23 that from a Sunni perspective, Iraqi detention centers require more oversight from the Ministry of Human Rights (MoHR) and faster judicial processing for detainees. They complained that the MoHR-led inter-ministerial detention committee inspections of Iraqi detention centers had ceased after its last inspection on February 21 of the "Adalah" facility, also known as the 2nd National Police Division detention facility at Forward Operating Base (FOB) JUSTICE. They said although delayed, the report for the February 21 inspection was "fair," and they suspected this was why the inspections had stopped. (Note: By invitation of Iraqi officials at Adalah, Los Angeles Times journalists visited the facility on July 19 and on July 21 published a report on their visit. End note.)

¶3. (C) Farhan and Faze reported that Deputy PM Zowbaie's office wrote to the MoHR's office in June to inquire why the inspections had stopped, and the MoHR replied that there was no logistical support for the inspections. (Note: Human Rights Minister Wijdan Salim reportedly in March rejected logistical support for the inspections, telling Task Force 134 -- which supports the inspections logistically in addition to managing Coalition detentions -- that PM Maliki

had instructed her to stand down the inter-ministerial inspections. Task Force 134 officials said they are ready to support inspections, whenever the MoHR confirms she can conduct them. End note.)

14. (C) Farhan and Faze expressed interest in visiting Adalah to "take a look," even if not under a formal inspection. They noted that Adalah is "filled with corruption", and alleged that a neighbor of Culture Minister Asad al-Hashimi was detained at Adalah and had undergone heavy torture in order to extract accusations against the Minister. (Note: The June 26 attempt to arrest the Minister -- on charges of involvement in the murders of the sons of lawmaker Mithal Al-Alusi -- precipitated the Sunni Tawafuq bloc's boycott of Cabinet meetings. End note.) They also alleged that Deputy PM Zowbaie's driver was recently released from Adalah after two months of detention, only after the Deputy PM appealed directly to PM Maliki. Faze and Farhan alleged the driver was not tortured, since his family paid 15,000 USD in bribes to detention center staff.

15. (C) Farhan and Faze also complained that the frequent transfer of detainees without their investigative files contributed to delays in judicial processing and therefore, unnecessarily drawn out detentions. They noted the investigative files for detainees transferred from other sites such as the Ministry of Defense (MoD) 3rd Brigade, 6th Division detention facility in Abu Ghreib to the Ministry of Justice's Rusafa detention center on the opposite side of the Tigris River, have often not accompanied the detainees themselves. Farhan and Faze noted that this procedural problem denied due process to innocent as well as guilty people.

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16. (C) In a separate, July 26 conversation with PolOffs, head of the parliament's Sunni Tawafuq bloc Ayad al-Sammaraie said that poor human rights conditions within Iraqi detention centers was a key issue impacting political reconciliation within Iraq. Al-Sammaraie expressed his view that the Human Rights Minister, despite having produced some detention center inspection reports, was too intimidated by the Prime Minister to press the issue. He pleaded for U.S. assistance to the parliament's human rights committee to build its capacity to advocate for improved conditions within Iraqi detention facilities. Al-Sammaraie noted that the committee needed to be able to do more than voice complaints through the media. He lamented that both the GOI and USG should be ashamed of what was occurring inside the facilities, which he alleged are employing torturers that had worked under Saddam Hussein's regime. Al-Sammaraie said although Sunnis are unhappy with the long-term detention without trial of many Sunnis at Coalition detention centers, the conditions in those facilities were at least humane.

SUNNI OFFICIALS: REHABILITATE COALITION-HELD DETAINEES

16. (C) Faze and Farhan said that Sunnis would welcome decentralizing the detainee population at Camp Bucca (which is located in Um Qasr near Basrah), moving detainees closer to their home communities, and rehabilitating detainees through vocational training and parole. They said that Deputy PM Zowbaie's office had recommended these actions to Coalition representatives after visiting Camp Bucca with Task Force 134 officials in March.

17. (C) Commenting on the prospects of visits by high-level Sunni politicians to Camp Bucca in the foreseeable future, Farhan and Faze said that they did not believe that any well-known Sunni officials would visit Camp Bucca unless promised releases in conjunction with the visit. When asked to clarify the size of a hypothetical group release that would be meaningful to Sunni political leaders, they said

perhaps "tens", meaning at least over 100. Farhan and Faze assessed, however, that Sunnis who are not high-level figures, including Omar Jabouri, who is Vice President Tareq al-Hashimi's human rights lead, would be willing to go to Camp Bucca to learn more about any substantive Coalition initiatives to decentralize and rehabilitate its detainee population -- without any release preconditions.

18. (C) Farhan and Faze alleged that Deputy PM Zowbaie had believed he was promised detainee releases in conjunction with his March visit to Camp Bucca, and had been upset that there were none. They explained that going to Camp Bucca without securing releases, would be viewed as a political failure to the political base of prominent Sunni leaders.

COMMENT

19. (C) Deputy PM Zowbaie's human rights staff and Ayad al-Sammaraie's comments provide context for the Tawafuq bloc's top two demands concerning human rights and detention centers issued as part of the bloc's July 25 pre-withdrawal ultimatum to the government (ref A). Sunnis seem most concerned about alleged torture and poor treatment of detainees within Iraqi detention centers, although also very concerned about long-term detentions without trial of allegedly innocent people in Coalition detention centers. The views of Deputy PM Zowbaie's staff and al-Sammaraie are consistent with increasing Sunni emphasis and coordination on human rights issues in order to pressure the GOI over the last several months (ref B). Post will explore programs to improve the parliamentary human rights committee as well as the MoHR's capacity to address human rights issues such as abuse in Iraqi detention facilities. END COMMENT.
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